

BellSouth has filed a petition at the FCC, asking the FCC to stop regulating broadband service, including access by local independent Internet Service Providers who resell

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) access to the Worldwide Web. For small Internet publishers and businesses, DSL offers many technical advantages.

BellSouth's assertion is that because they already control over 90% of the broadband

DSL access in their market area, their proposed change will have little effect on the competitive landscape, and that this change will not harm consumers.

We strongly disagree. If this petition is granted for BellSouth and other phone companies, independent ISPs would have to individually negotiate pricing and the ability to interconnect, which would certainly raise prices to the consumer, since phone companies would no longer have to offer competitive prices for DSL.

The more serious threat is that the phone companies will refuse to provide the necessary connections for independent DSL service. We are convinced that if phone companies were not required to provide access to all ISPs, all DSL customers would immediately suffer from higher prices and unresponsive service.

This is a long-term threat which requires a near-term response. The independent companies which built the Internet itself should not be wiped away and replaced by the large telephone monopolies. While BellSouth doesn't serve my region in California, Verizon and Qwest have followed up and filed similar requests with the FCC, and we expect SBC to follow suit in California.

I'm a long-time residential and business customer of many California local and long-distance phone companies, cable TV/Internet companies, and independent ISPs. I can assure you that the ONLY reason that big telephone companies don't raise DSL prices and toss out their "customer-support" staff is that the independent ISPs provide a level of service and TECHNICAL SKILL that's quite competitive.

There is absolutely no good reason for the Federal Communications Commission to help CREATE a DSL monopoly -- unless the FCC wants to permit another failure of corporate "self-regulation." Please protect independent DSL Internet access.